

The Rich Young Ruler

by Chuck Smith

Jesus offers a rich, full, and abundant life that is available to all who follow him, and it is a choice between earthly treasures and eternal riches.

Duration: 37:27

Scripture: Matthew 6:19

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Discipleship"

Description

This sermon delves into the story of the rich young ruler in Mark's gospel, emphasizing the importance of seeking eternal life and the true riches found in following Jesus. It explores the concept of giving up earthly possessions to gain heavenly treasures, highlighting the need to prioritize God above all else and to follow Him wholeheartedly for a rich, abundant life.

Transcript

For our scripture reading today, let's turn to Luke's gospel, chapter 12, and our scripture reading will begin with verse 13, and we will read on down to verse 21. I'll read the 13th in the odd-numbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead you in the reading of the even-numbered verses, and shall we stand as we read the word of God.

And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother that he may divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness. For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do? Because I have no room where to bestow all my fruit. And he said, This will I do.

I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then who shall those things be which thou hast provided? And so is he that layeth up treasures for himself and is not rich toward God.

Let's pray.

Father, we pray that you will help us, that we might really consider what are the true riches, that we might be rich, Lord, toward you, and rich in the things of the Spirit. Lord, we see so many people that are caught up in the things of the world, and Lord, such empty, empty values. But Lord, we thank you for what you have done for us.

And we pray, Lord, that you'll just help us to appreciate the riches that are ours in and through Jesus Christ, our Lord. So, Lord, open now our hearts as we turn to your Word. Speak to us, Lord, through your Word, and we thank you in Jesus' name.

Amen. May we be seated? Well, we're moving through the Bible. We're in the Gospel according to Mark at the present time, and this week we are in Mark 10, 11, and 12.

And so we encourage you to read these three chapters over. Join with us tonight at 7 30 as we gather together and as we will be looking and studying these three chapters. We would encourage you to go through the whole Bible with us.

We're not going really at such a rapid pace that you can't keep up. Our little grandchildren are able to keep up with the reading, and so I'm sure that if they can, you can too. So it's not, well, it's such value to become so rich in the Word of God and in the things of the Spirit.

And so we would encourage you, do keep up with the reading and learn what the Bible has to say. You know, if I would question you, do you believe that the Bible is the Word of God? I'm certain that we would get an affirmative from most of you. Yes, I believe it is the Word of God.

Do you believe that it is all the Word of God? Oh yes, I believe that the whole Bible is the Word of God. Well, do you know what the Bible has to say? Well, I know part of it. You know, I know John 3 16, and, but it's more than John 3 16.

It is, it includes that, but there's so much. And, you know, what, what you know about Oprah Winfrey won't even get you, you know, nothing. And yet so many of you, you know, can give me all kinds of facts about her, where she lives in Montecito and all of this kind of stuff, but not going to get you anything.

But what you know about the Bible will get you eternal life. And so I want to just encourage you, read the Bible, study the Bible, learn the Bible. And Jesus said, these things have I spoken unto you that your joy may be full and what fullness of joy it will bring into your life.

And so this week, Mark 10, 11, and 12, we encourage you to read it over and then come on out tonight and join with us as we continue this exciting journey from Genesis to Revelation. This morning, we'd like to draw your attention to Mark's gospel, chapter 10, and we're going to begin reading with verse 17. Here, Mark tells us about this rich young ruler, and it tells us when Jesus was gone forth into the way, there came one running and kneeled to him and asked him, good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, why do you call me good? There's none good, but one that is God.

You know the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honor thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and he said unto him, one thing you lack, go thy way, sell whatever you have, and give the money to the poor, and you shall have treasure in

heaven, and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

And we read, and he was sad at that saying, and he went away grieved, for he had great possessions. So Mark tells us this story of this rich young ruler who came to Jesus, knelt before him, and asked how he could have eternal life. This word eternal life, as it is in the Greek, is not speaking of a quantity.

Now we do know that we have eternal life through Jesus Christ, never ending, but this particular Greek word is not speaking of the quantity of life, but it speaks of a quality of life. This rich age abiding life that we can have through Jesus Christ. I would guess that this rich young ruler had been observing Jesus.

He saw how that he was so in control of every situation, watched him under many stressful conditions, and saw how Jesus handled these occasions, and realized that Jesus had a quality of life that money and success had not brought to him. Even more, he longed to have this same quality of life that he observed in Jesus. Now this man had all of the things that we usually think are necessary for the good life.

First of all, he was rich. So many people do think if I were only rich, I would be happy. But the story as we follow it shows that this man with his riches was ultimately brought to sorrow.

He was young. Some gained their riches late in life, really too late to fully enjoy them. They don't have the same energy and drive and desire that they had in their earlier years, and so by the time the riches come where they could do more of the things that they would have liked to have done when they are younger, they're no longer capable of doing.

This fellow was not only young and rich, but also he was a ruler. Looking at this young man from his standpoint, if he were a neighbor of yours, you would probably be very jealous of him. You would be thinking how nice it would be if I can have all that he has.

Riches, youth, position, the good job, the nice home, the expensive car. More than this, he was a moral man, just a good man. When Jesus told him, keep the commandments, and he flashed into his mind the second table of stone are the commandments that dealt with your relationship with your fellow man.

He could say to Jesus, you know, I've done all of these for my youth, but what lack I yet? Though he was moral and then a good man from those things, still with his riches, with all that he had, there was still that consciousness that life has to be more than this. What lack I yet? With all of these things, he had that consciousness of a lack in his life. There was that emptiness that was there, but he boasted that he had kept all of the commandments, and yet I'm still lacking something.

Now, I do believe that he was sincere. We read at this point, Jesus didn't say, well, you know, you failed here, here, and here. He just, Jesus looked at him, and he loved him.

He saw the earnest desire that this young man had for a life that was above the ordinary life, and so a quality of life that he had not experienced, that was despite all of his wealth and position, he was still lacking. We see him as he is kneeling before Jesus, and he said, good master, what must I do to have this age-abiding life? Now, Jesus answered his question with a very strange question. Jesus said, why do you call me good? There's none good but one, and that is God.

Now, if you look at that, you realize that Jesus is asking a question that he is either saying, I am no good, or he is saying, I am God. Why do you say good, master? Only God is good. Is Jesus saying, I am no good, or is he saying, I am God? I believe that Jesus was saying to this young man, why do you call me

good? It's because you recognize a truth about me.

You recognize who I am. There's only one that is good, and that is God, and thus there is that recognition that you have there, knowing that I am God. That is why you called me good.

He's trying to awaken his consciousness as to who Jesus actually is. That quality of life that he is observing in Jesus, the life that he desires for himself is that divine life, and that is that Jesus is God. Jesus said to him, you know the commandments.

Do not commit adultery. Do not kill. Do not steal.

Do not bear false witness. Defraud not, and honor your father and mother. As he is quoting to him the second table of the law, as you know the law was written on two tables of stone.

The first table had to do with the requirements of the law of man's relationship with God, the laws that pertain to how you are to relate to God. The second table of the law was how you are to relate to fellow men, and how God would have us to live in relationship to our fellow men, and Jesus rehearses for him the second table of the law. Matthew's gospel tells us that this point he said, I've done all of that.

I've kept those commandments. What lack I had. There was still this emptiness that is there.

Life still is more than what I've yet experienced. I've sought to be a moral man, a good man. I've sought to, you know, love my neighbor as myself, and so forth, and to help my neighbor.

But Lord, what lack I yet. And Jesus, beholding him, had said, loved him, and said to him, one thing you lack. Go your way.

Sell whatever you have. Give the money to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven. And come, take up the cross, and follow me.

What was the one thing that he lacked? You say poverty. No, no. You're reading it superficially.

You haven't really looked carefully at the text, because if it were poverty, the story would have no application for most of us today. I really do not believe that this quality of life that he is desiring, I can be attained by selling everything you have, and giving the money to the poor. Jesus went on to say, come and follow me.

And there is the secret to this wonderful, rich, age-abiding life. Following Jesus Christ. You commit, need to commit your life fully to God, Jesus is saying, to find this life.

Follow me. Why did you call me good? Because you recognize there is something about me. It is that I am God.

And thus, if you want to know this rich, abundant life, follow me. And you can experience it, and know it. And Jesus, when he said, go sell what you have, and give the money to the poor, he was just putting his finger on what was keeping this young man from following Jesus.

And this was the thing that was standing in the way of his following the Lord. So, what is keeping you today from following Jesus? And that would be the thing that Jesus would put his finger on this morning in your life. And that is what you have to get rid of, in order to know this age-abiding, rich, abundant life.

Going back to the first question that Jesus asked, why do you call me good? Only one is good, that's God. And Jesus is saying, you need God at the center of your life. You need to follow after God, follow me.

Maybe now we understand why Jesus did not quote to him the first table of the law, that which dealt with his relationship with God. The first commandment that said, thou shalt have no other gods before me. With this young man, and with so many people today, obviously, his money was the chief God in his life.

And rather than to quote the commandment, thou shalt have no other gods before me, Jesus illustrated to him by commanding him to sell everything he had, and to give the money to the poor, and to take up the cross and follow Jesus. Mark 10.22 tells us he was sad at that saying. He went away grieved, for he had great possessions.

Here's the case where his great riches made him sad. Riches were his God, and it was sad for him to think of the thought of having to give them up. He went away grieved.

And this is one of those stories in the Bible that the Bible doesn't give to us, the end of the story. What happened to him? The Bible doesn't tell us, and so it sort of leaves us with wondering just what did happen. But I can tell you one of two things did happen.

He went away, and he thought of the cost, and compared it with the gain. The physical riches versus eternal riches. He compared the earthly treasure, which at best was temporal, with the heavenly treasure that he could enjoy forever.

We read that Moses had to make that same choice, and the same kind of a decision. Concerning Moses, we read in Hebrews 11.24. By faith, Moses, when he came of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he considered the eternal consequences.

So he forsook Egypt and endured as seeing him who is invisible. So basically, that's what Moses had to face. He had the choice.

He could be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and he could have inherited all of the riches and the throne of Egypt. But he chose rather to be identified with the people of God, because he had respect unto the ultimate consequences of that choice. When I was so long ago, I can hardly remember when I was that age, but it was shortly after I was married that I got hold of the book concerning these young fellows who were missionaries down in Ecuador.

And they had a great desire and burden to take the gospel to this very savage tribe of Indians there in the jungles of Ecuador. They were the luka Indians, and they were known as vicious, vicious killers. People that would go into the luka territory would usually not come out.

The lukas would kill them. And they knew the viciousness of the luka Indian, and yet they had a real desire to take the gospel to them. They figured, you know, if there's anybody in the world that needs to know the gospel, it's the luka Indians.

And so they began trying to make contact with the lukas. They would fly over the territory where they were. They began to drop packages to them.

They began to drop gifts to them. And they were trying to make a friendly contact with the lukas. Jim Elliott was one of the missionaries that was endeavoring to reach these luka Indians.

Jim Elliott had gone to Wheaton College. He had excelled in some of the sports and especially in wrestling. And he had won the AAU championship of the United States in his weight division.

In writing to his parents about winning the AAU championship, he said, you'll probably hear that I've won some awards for the wrestling in the AAU contest. And he said, I want you to know that I did not train and all in order to win the awards that I have, he said, but I trained in order that I might give to the Lord a strong, well-coordinated body that he could use for his glory. And so Jim was that kind of a young fellow who had really just dedicated his life fully and commit and completely to the Lord.

He was writing and corresponding with a friend back here in the United States. And he was telling him in his letters how that they were attempting to reach these luka Indians with the gospel, to share the gospel with them and relating to them how they were dropping these gifts and how that they made some initial contacts. His friend here in the States wrote back and said, Jim, you're a fool to try and reach those savages for Jesus Christ.

He said, it'll probably cost you your life. And you're a fool to give your life just for those savage people. Jim wrote his friend back in the States and said, no man is a fool who gives up that which he cannot keep in order to gain that which he cannot lose.

And so Jim continued to seek to reach the luka Indians and ultimately was killed by the luka Indians on the banks of the Aranka River where they had made their attempts to reach into the tribe. But his thoughts, no man is a fool to give up that which he cannot keep. In order to gain that which he cannot lose.

Jesus said, don't lay up for yourself treasures on earth where moth can rust, rust can corrupt, and where thieves can break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust can corrupt and thieves cannot break through or steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

So Jesus ordered his servants to sell everything and to distribute the proceeds to the poor. This would be the other thing that could have happened to the rich young ruler. That he looked at his riches and thought, you know, they haven't made me happy.

And, you know, it looks like the disciples of Jesus are so content. I wish I had that kind of contentment. And so he went out and he told his servants, sell everything.

Give the money to the poor. I'm out of here. I'm going to be following Jesus.

Or he shook his head and he said, I cannot believe that I had done such a foolish thing. The audacity of Jesus to tell me to sell all my possessions and follow him. We don't know what happened to one of the other.

Perhaps sometime in the future when he was at a party with friends, the subject of Jesus came up and he jokingly shared with his friends how that, yes, I met Jesus one day. You know, I actually fell on my knees before him and I asked him what I had to do in order to have, you know, that kind of rich life that he has. And you know what? He told me to sell everything that I have.

Give the money to the poor and follow him. Can you believe that? I can't believe that I was so foolish as to, you know, come to Jesus like that. And he laughed at his foolish impulse of coming to Christ.

It's possible to be drawn close to Christ by the Holy Spirit, but turning away from Jesus, one day you can get so callous that you will laugh and make fun of the conviction that you once experienced. Maybe you at one time were close to Jesus seeking the gift of eternal life. And now with a smile and amusement, you sort of scoff or laugh at that night that you went forward.

And perhaps the reason you are here today is that the Holy Spirit is drawing you once again. You tried to fill the void in your life with so many things, but it's still there. And you still have that longing for more in life than what you have been able to find in the world in which you live.

Perhaps now you are older and wiser, and this time you will not walk away, but you will leave today rejoicing in the discovery of that age-abiding life. Jesus said, I've come that you might have life and that more abundantly. And this is what he is offering to you today, that rich, full, abundant life.

I think that David probably describes it best in their 23rd Psalm, where he says, my cup runneth over. Not just my cup is full, my cup runneth over. That rich life that you can know in Christ, and thus it's yours.

It's available. You don't have to sell anything to get it. There may be things that you'll have to get rid of in order to attain it.

If you, say, have a filthy mouth and you curse a lot, you'll probably have to give up that kind of stuff. If, you know, you are chasing women and so forth, you probably have to give up that. But he'll put his finger on whatever it is in your life that is keeping you back from the rich, full, abundant life that you can have by knowing him and following him.

So the basic thing is, follow me. That's the basic command. Whatever it is that's keeping you from following him completely, that's the incidental that you'll have to deal with.

And he'll put the finger on that for you. He'll show you what it is that's holding you back from the rich, full life that he wants you to enjoy in following him. Father, we thank you for the lesson of this rich, young ruler.

And Lord, we don't know what happened to him. But Lord, we can only imagine. But Lord, we do pray in our own lives as we realize that there is a rich, abundant life that we can know by following you.

That there are those here today that are being held back because there are things in their life that they just can't get rid of. And Lord, they have come close to the kingdom. They've been drawn, attracted by the rich, full life that you have promised.

But Lord, they just aren't yet ready or willing to give up the things of the world that are holding them back. But Lord, help them to weigh those temporal things that are keeping them from enjoying the eternal riches of fellowship and walking with you. And Lord, let it be a time where you are just really speaking to their hearts about the things that are eternal.

And may they make the wise choice today. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.

Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you today if your desire is to have that rich, full, abundant life that is promised to us through Jesus Christ. And so we would encourage you when we're dismissed, just come on forward and just say to them, you know, I would like to come and just

follow Jesus Christ. If there are things in your life that are hindering or keeping you from following him, let him take care of it.

I can't tell you what it is. And I don't think any of us here would even try to tell you what it is. But you know, and that's the important thing, that you know what it is and that you are able to deal with it today and you're able to let the Lord deal with it.

And that's the important thing. And so this is perhaps your day. You're close.

Don't walk away. But come and let Jesus enrich you and bless you with that age-abiding life that is there for each one who will just follow him. The Lord bless thee and keep thee.

The Lord make his face to shine upon thee. And be gracious unto thee. And be gracious unto thee.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace. God bless you.

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